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ABSTRACT

A project was initiated to provide a means of assisting nontraditional community college students with an area of special need--career selection. An IBM PC-XT microcomputer was purchased, and Educational Testing Services SIGI (System of Interactive Guidance Information) Plus career search software was leased to disseminate vocational education information for the adult and nontraditional student. Counseling staff worked individually with minority students to introduce them to SIGI Plus. All counselors were trained in the use of SIGI Plus; faculty members were introduced to it. Activities using SIGI Plus were incorporated into some courses by faculty and into the new student orientation classes. Area and state employers were invited to use SIGI Plus in whatever way appropriate for their organizations. An evaluation found that users of SIGI Plus perceived it to be a positive experience that was helpful and accurate in reflecting self-perception of values, interests, and career choices. (Appendixes include a brochure on SIGI Plus, faculty and student questionnaires, and correspondence.) (YLB)

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FINAL REPORT

Using the Microprocessor to Facilitate Career Development

Needs of the Community College Non-Traditional Adult Learner

Vocational Guidance and Counseling Project

Conducted Under
Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act
Public Law 98-524, Title II
Project Number: VA-86-1-113-GC-001

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August 2, 1986

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I. ABSTRACT of Final Report for Vocational Guidance and Counseling Project

A. Title of Project: Using the Microprocessor to Facilitate Career Development Needs of the Community College Non-Traditional Adult Learner.

B. Time Period: September 15, 1985 through August 2, 1986.

C. Objectives of the Project:

1. To plan and implement activities designed to disseminate vocational education information for the non-traditional and adult learner.

2. To plan and implement activities to disseminate vocational education information to minority students.

3. To plan and implement in-service training for all faculty in the use of SIGI Plus.

4. To plan and implement in-service training for all counseling personnel in use of SIGI Plus.

5. To incorporate activities using SIGI Plus to expand existing career assessment and job values clarification programs for all students.

6. To provide expanded career/vocational educational information that assists in eliminating sex bias in career goal setting.

7. To plan and implement activities that disseminate vocational educational information to the business/industry sector as it interacts with the community college.

D. Procedures followed:

1. The hardware and software were purchased and received, Student Services Personnel were trained, and the new services were introduced to the college faculty and staff.

2. The SIGI PLUS career service was advertised, presented to businesses, high schools and the special groups, offered to students, and data was collected.

3. The data was evaluated, and the results reported to college personnel and the final report prepared.

E. Results: This project allowed Germanna to lease a computer career information system and purchase a computer for guidance and counseling that would not have been available otherwise. Students and members of the community benefited by experiencing a career search with values, skills, self-assessment, coping skills, decision making and goal attainment components. A significant addition to the existing career counseling program was added.

F. Evaluation: The SIGI PLUS program has been well utilized, and the response of the users has been very positive.

G. Conclusions and Recommendations: This project has proven to be a valuable asset to the Student Services and Counseling functions at Germanna Community College. Experience with this program would indicate that other institutions could greatly benefit as Germanna has. The continued availability of SIGI PLUS is essential to future high quality career development at Germanna.

II. Body of the Report:

A. Project name: Using the Microprocessor to Facilitate Career Development Needs of the Community College Nontraditional Adult Learner

B. Problem Area: A large percentage of the students attending Germanna Community College are non-traditional as is indicated by an average student age of 28. The students have unique needs as they return to college, and this project was initiated with the intention of providing a means of assisting students in an area of special need: career selection. Of the many materials available commercially, SIGI Plus was chosen for its extensive career information as well as its well developed self-assessment and career search components. No other software matched its vast information base, one that is especially useful to the non-traditional student.

C. Goals and Objectives:

1. Objective:

To plan and implement activities designed to disseminate vocational education information for the non-traditional and adult learner.

Procedure:

Using the funds from this proposal, an IBM PC-XT was purchased and Educational Testing Services SIGI Plus career search software was leased for the purpose of disseminating vocational education information for the adult and non-traditional student. The service pro-

vided by this software has greatly enhanced the quality of career counseling at Germanna. SIGI Plus includes areas that are of particular interest to adult and non-traditional students. In particular, one adult student commented that SIGI Plus is much better suited to the adult student rather than the high school student by virtue of its concern with detail and depth.

2. Objective:

To plan and implement activities to disseminate vocational education information to minority students.

Procedure:

The counseling staff worked individually with each member of the Black Studies Association and introduced them to SIGI Plus and the vocational information available through its use. Also a letter of announcement and a brochure (Appendix A) were sent to the major minority organizations in the Germanna service region. The list was derived from the college's minority recruitment plan.

3. Objective:

To plan and implement in-service training for all faculty in the use of SIGI Plus.

Procedure:

Faculty members have been invited to use SIGI Plus (Appendix B), have received the SIGI Plus brochure. have been introduced to and invited to use SIGI Plus at faculty meetings, and have been asked to fill out an evaluation questionaire (Appendix C). Some

faculty members have required students in certain classes to use SIGI Plus as part of their coursework, thereby indicating support of the program.

4. Objective:

To plan and implement in-service training for all counseling personnel in the use of SIGI Plus.

Procedure:

All counselors have been trained in the use of SIGI Plus and other members of the Student Services staff have been introduced to its features in order that they might be able to answer student questions about the program. The Student Services secretary has been trained to start students on the program and instructed to direct SIGI Plus users to counselors upon completion of the exercise.

5. Objective:

To incorporate activities using SIGI Plus to expand existing career assessment and job values clarification programs for all students.

Procedure:

SIGI Plus has significantly expanded the quality and quantity of career information available to students at Germanna. In particular, the areas of values clarification, skills assessment, coping assessment, decision-making skills instruction and guidance on practical first

steps toward career goals attainment have been added to the computer information base at Germanna. Adult and non-traditional students have found these additional offerings especially helpful.

Some faculty members have required students to use SIGI Plus as part of their coursework. Articles have appeared in local papers inviting members of the community to use the service.

These services have been offered to students through incorporation into new student orientation classes for the 1986 winter and spring quarters. Because the awarding of the grant was delayed, the fall 1985 sections of orientation were missed. Since fall quarter orientation classes are the largest of each year, the heaviest use is anticipated for the fall 1986 quarter.

6. Objectives:

To provide expanded career/vocational educational information that assists in eliminating sex bias in career goal setting.

Procedure:

The purchase of SIGI Plus has greatly enhanced the availability of sexually unbiased career information for Germanna's students. There is no sexual orientation to the information in the interest and values inventories. SIGI Plus users were surveyed about any sexual bias seen in the exercises. Eighty-five per cent strongly agreed that the SIGI Plus program presented no sexual slant in relation to potential career options.

7. Objective:

To plan and implement activities that disseminate vocational educational information to the business/industry sector as it interacts with the community college.

Procedure:

Business/Industry representatives from Germanna's service region were introduced to SIGI Plus during the annual Career Fair held on-campus May 1, 1986. Our brochure was also sent to 553 of the area and state employers inviting them to use SIGI Plus in whatever way appropriate for their organizations (Appendix D).

D. Description

This project was designed to meet the special career information needs of the non-traditional student. Most of Germanna's students do not attend college immediately after high school as is evidenced by an average student age of 28. These adult students have not had a recent availability of quality career decision materials. However, they are often in the process of making career changes and need the kind of information that SIGI Plus makes available.

Germanna is a small rurally located community college that serves a rapidly developing suburban population in the Washington-Richmond corridor. Germanna's student population includes 1765 full and part-time students: 81% are part-time and 62% are women. There are 35 full-time faculty members and 3 counselors.

The objectives of this project have been met through a variety of techniques including attending training sessions, making presentations in classes, presenting exhibits, purchasing hardware and software, and working with students and others in individual and group settings.

E. Results and accomplishments

This project has contributed to improving guidance and counseling for the non-traditional student by providing inservice training for guideance and other appropriate staff, by providing expanded computer capability, and improving the career information and decision-making programs available.

F. Evaluation

Approximately 100 individuals interacted with SIGI Plus during 1986 winter and spring quarters. Demographic data was collected on 80 of these students. The information gathered on student users indicate that 20 per cent were male; 80 per cent were female; 9.5 per cent were minority. A break-down of age ranges show 6.3 per cent were less than 18; 13.8 per cent were 18-19; 27.5 per cent were 20-29; 38.8 per cent were 30+.

A follow-up survey was mailed out in June 1986. Of those 80 student users, a 42.5 per cent return was obtained. In this survey, a five-point rating scale was utilized to evaluate the user's experience with SIGI Plus. Students were presented with seven statements and were asked to rate each as agreed strongly (1); agreed somewhat (2);

disagree somewhat (3); disagree strongly (4); or no opinion. In responding to this survey (Appendix E), it was found that 47 per cent of the student users agreed strongly and another 38.2 per cent agreed somewhat that SIGI Plus was helpful. Only 5.9 per cent disagreed somewhat with the statement and another 5.9 per cent disagreed strongly; while 2.9 per cent responded with no opinion. Students were asked to rate SIGI Plus as to whether or not they considered the program to be sexually slanted in assisting users make career choices. Eighty-five per cent of those surveyed agreed strongly that SIGI Plus seemed sexually non-biased and another 8.8 per cent agreed somewhat. There was no disagreement with the statement that SIGI Plus was a program which showed no sexual bias in its exercise, and 5.9 per cent responded with no opinion.

The third item on the survey asked users to indicate how closely SIGI Plus coincided with the career choice finally decided upon by that person. 35.3 per cent agreed strongly that SIGI Plus results coincided with ultimate career choices made. 41.2 per cent agreed somewhat that SIGI Plus results coincided with career choices, while 2.9 responded with disagree somewhat and 8.8 per cent disagreed strongly. 11.8 per cent gave no opinion.

Item four on the survey was a statement referring to values and interests. Students were asked to rate how closely SIGI Plus results seemed to appropriately reflect their values and interests. Another 38.3 per cent agreed somewhat, while only 2.9 per cent disagreed somewhat and 2.9 per cent disagreed strongly. No opinion responses totalled 5.9 per cent.

Item five was a statement referring to how strongly a person agreed or not with recommending SIGI Plus to someone else. A high percentage of 79.4 strongly agreed and 11.8 per cent somewhat agreed that they would recommend SIGI Plus to others. Only 2.9 per cent disagreed somewhat and 5.9 per cent disagreed strongly.

A statement was included to elicit an opinion on the location and accessibility of SIGI Plus to students. 76.5 per cent agreed strongly that SIGI Plus was located in an appropriate spot and very accessible to the user. Another 14.7 per cent agreed somewhat, while only 2.9 per cent disagreed somewhat and 2.9 per cent disagreed strongly. A no opinion response was registered by 2.9 per cent.

The last statement for students surveyed was to get the user to rate the assistance received. 76.5 per cent agreed strongly and 14.7 per cent agreed somewhat with the statement that they had received all the assistance they needed. Only 2.9 per cent disagreed strongly and 5.9 per cent had no opinion.

In summary, it seems users of SIGI Plus perceived it to be a positive experience that was helpful and accurate in reflecting self-perception of values, interests and career choices. Users almost totally concurred that SIGI Plus was sexually unbiased.

Ninety per cent indicated that SIGI Plus was accessible, that the assistance received was adequate, and that they would recommend SIGI Plus to others. On five out of seven survey items less than 10 per cent of the surveyed users had any level of negative responses to make concerning their entire interaction with SIGI Plus.

G. Conclusions

This project has proven to be a valuable asset to the guidance and counseling functions at Germanna. The experience of this institution indicates that other institutions of its kind could greatly benefit as Germanna has. As a result of the new services that have been made available, students have been better able to make considered and informed career choices.

The SIGI Plus software has been well utilized considering the large amount of time required for completion, and the response has been very positive for the most part. While the depth of detail with which SIGI Plus deals is a valuable addition to career assessment, it is felt that the time required for completion of the program is more than feasible to devote to one student. It's interactive format attracted the same students back for second, third, and sometimes fourth visits. Thus, the access to new students became limited.

The continued availability of SIGI Plus is essential. The college is committed at this time to leasing this software on a continuing basis. A new standard has been established in the quality of career materials available to Germanna's students, and it should be maintained.

System of Interactive Guidance Information PLUS

SIGI PLUS is an indepth, interactive software program that provides career guidance and information. SIGI PLUS is licensed by the Educational Testing Service and runs on an IBM PC XT. It is available through a grant funded by the Department of Education of the State of Virginia.

SIGI PLUS includes all the major aspects of career decision making and planning. It is composed of a system of nine independent sections that are described in more detail on the following pages.

SIGI PLUS can be self-administered and provides print-outs of results for anyone wishing to keep the information in personal records. This service is free and is offered through the Office of Student Services at Germanna Community College.

The SIGI PLUS system includes nine sections that are explained below.

INTRODUCTION
covers an overview and instructions on how to use the system.

SELF-ASSESSMENT
investigates work-related values and work activities. A person can choose fields of interest desired in a career.

SEARCH
allows a person to generate a list of potential career options based on values, interests, skills, and levels of education.

INFORMATION
answers questions about skills required for different occupations, and advancement possibilities in that field. It gives potential income information, and the national outlook on future hirings.

SKILLS
offers detailed explanations of required skills for any chosen occupation. It provides examples of how these skills are applied in everyday life.

PREPARING
spells out the typical preparation paths to enter a chosen occupation. It helps a person estimate the likelihood of completing that preparation.

COPING
makes suggestions on how to deal with issues related to career preparation. It offers ways to handle common worries experienced by adults in college.

DECIDING
provides a strategy for decision-making. This section helps a person to summarize what's been done in the previous sections. It covers the rewards for a chosen occupation.

NEXT STEPS
helps a person decide what the next step is to put the plan into action. It includes resume writing tips and offers strategy for setting short-term goals.

Let SIGI PLUS help you make a good choice!

For

More Information

Call

Student Services

899-4009

or

399-1333

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

TO

GERMANNA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Route 3 P.O. Box 339
LOCUST GROVE, VIRGINIA 22508

Are

You Making

A

Career Decision?

GERMANNA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Germanna Faculty

FROM: James A. Grigsby and Sarah W. Somerville

SUBJECT: SIGI

DATE: June 18, 1986

The hard disk is repaired, and SIGI is available again after being down since early May. If you have students who are undecided about their career plans, they should find SIGI to be helpful. It is a very comprehensive interest inventory, and a similar service would cost them from $25 to $65 if they were to go to a private career agency. They are able to walk out with an extensive computer print-out of career options and detailed career information.

If you have not had a chance to experience SIGI, we would like to invite you to come by and take advantage of it while usage is light.

JAG:SWS/clb

SIGI PLUS Faculty Questionaire

Please help us by indicating your opinion on the following statements which refer to your experience with SIGI PLUS.

	AGREE		DISAGREE		NO OPINION
1. SIGI PLUS is easy to use. Comments:	1	2	3	4	[ ]
2. SIGI PLUS contains useful career information for my curriculum. Comments:	1	2	3	4	[ ]
3. The program lacks sexual bias. Comments:	1	2	3	4	[ ]
4. SIGI PLUS is more satisfactory than VA VIEW. Comments:	1	2	3	4	[ ]
5. The logic of the values and interests inventory seems valid. Comments:	1	2	3	4	[ ]
6. The location of SIGI PLUS is accessible and appropriate. Comments:	1	2	3	4	[ ]
7. I will recommend SIGI PLUS to my students. Comments:	1	2	3	4	[ ]
8. Students should be introduced to SIGI PLUS during GENL 100. Comments:	1	2	3	4	[ ]

July 1986

Dear Employer:

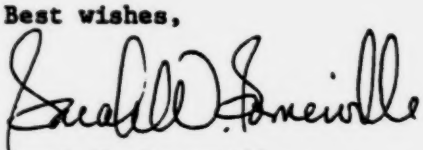
Hello, again, from Germanna's Office of Student Services.

This letter has a two-fold purpose. First, the Office of Student Services wishes to announce an addition to our available services. Through grant funding from the State of Virginia, Germanna has been able to purchase an IBM PC/XT and a software program, SIGI Plus. A brochure has been enclosed for your information. If our office can provide this service to your organization in any way, please let us know.

Secondly, it is time to update the literature in our Career Development Library. Please send any updated literature or recruiting materials to help us promote your organization and keep our files current.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please feel free to let me know if there is any assistance Germanna can provide for you.

Best wishes,



Sarah W. Somerville
Counselor

SWS/clb

Enclosure

As part of the grant which funded this project, we are required to survey the people who used SIGI Plus and find what their opinions are concerning its effectiveness.

Since you used SIGI this year, we would appreciate your filling out the enclosed questionnaire and returning it in the enclosed envelope by July 18, 1986.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated and will help ensure that others will have the chance to use SIGI as you have.

Sincerely,

James A. Grigsby
Counselor

and

Sarah W. Somerville
Counselor

JAG:SWS/clb

Enclosures

SIGI Plus Student Questionnaire

Please help us by indicating your opinion on the following statements which refer to your experience with SIGI Plus. We would appreciate your completing and returning this survey by July 18, 1986.

	AGREE			DISAGREE	NO OPINION
1. SIGI Plus was helpful.	1	2	3	4	[ ]
Comments:					
2. SIGI Plus was not sexually slanted.	1	2	3	4	[ ]
Comments:					
3. My career choice coincides with SIGI Plus results.	1	2	3	4	[ ]
Comments:					
4. The results seemed appropriate to my values and interests.	1	2	3	4	[ ]
Comments:					
5. I have or would recommend SIGI Plus to others.	1	2	3	4	[ ]
Comments:					
6. The location of SIGI Plus was accessible and appropriate.	1	2	3	4	[ ]
Comments:					
7. I received all the assistance I needed.	1	2	3	4	[ ]
Comments:					

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